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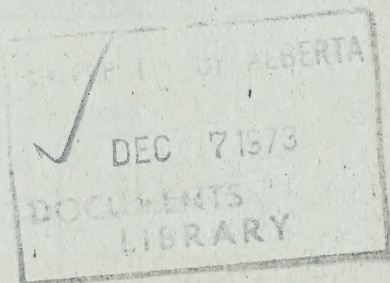
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ATTITUDES TOWARD COLLECTIVE GUILT
IN
THE AMERICAN ZONE OF GERMANY

This report is based on results of survey made in the last two weeks of December, 1946 by ODIC Opinion Surveys. Personal interviews were held with 3005 Germans living in the American Zone, representing a true cross-section of the population there. The field work was done by a trained German staff.



Report Number 51
2 April 1947
ODIC Opinion Surveys Hq.
OMGUS (Rear) APO 757

51

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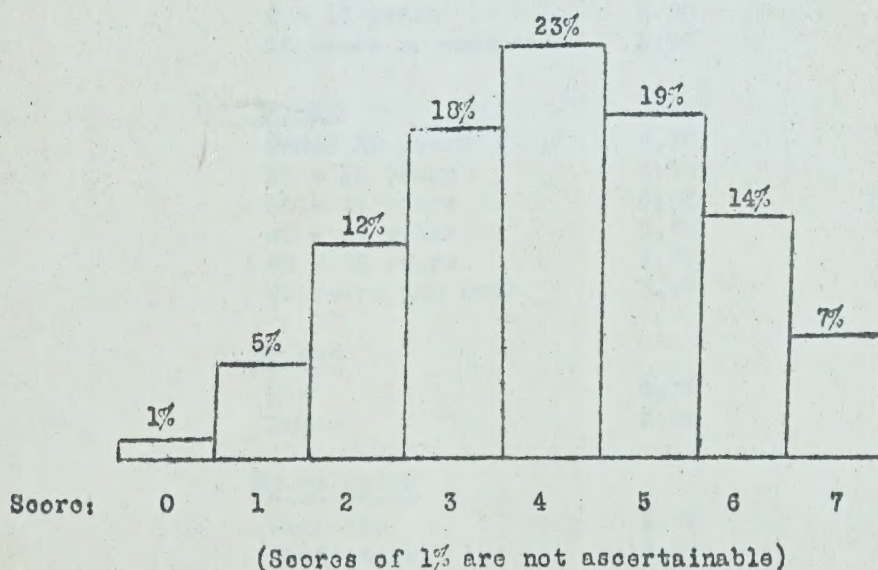
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FEW GERMANS ACCEPT COLLECTIVE GUILT ...

To ascertain whether Germans living in the American Zone accept or reject collective responsibility for the crimes and misdeeds done in the name of their former government, seven related questions were asked. The bill of particulars covered a variety of issues: do the Germans share responsibility for the acts of the Hitler regime because they supported it? ... are they collectively guilty for the war because they gave power to a war-minded Government? ... was Poland attacked to protect Germans there from mistreatment by the Polish government? ... did a "harsh" Versailles Treaty justify the war? ... does Germany often find herself in difficulties because other people misunderstand her? ... were both sides in the war equally guilty of committing many war crimes? ... did the Germans torture and murder millions of helpless Europeans?

Scores were computed by totalling the proportions rejecting guilt -- or rationalizing past behavior -- on each of the seven questions. Thus, in the following chart, those scoring zero accept responsibility on all seven points, those scoring 1 reject collective guilt on any one of the seven, and so on, until in score 7 collective responsibility is rejected on all seven questions.* The median average score for the total population is 3.8.

Rejection of Collective Guilt.



*The "rejection" scores include "No opinion" replies which were high on most of the seven questions. They were included because they correlated with evasive or unwilling replies (as reported by the interviewers), and also with the anti-semitic scale, and thus strongly presume the rejection of guilt. The questions are treated individually later in the report.

Rejection of guilt is generalized ...

On the whole, rejection of collective guilt is not specific to any one population group. The best educated (12 years or more schooling), it is true, are much more likely to accept responsibility than other education groups, as are the higher income group. Women tend more than men to reject collective guilt. And Protestants, more than Catholics, are likely to wipe their hands of any complicity. But, as already stated, the differences among population groups are slight -- and the generalness, rather than the specificity, of rejection of collective guilt is the note-worthy finding. This is seen in the following comparison of median average scores of different segments of the American Zone population. (In order to interpret the significance of the scores, bear in mind that a score of 3.5 means rejection of guilt on half of any of the seven questions -- and higher or lower scores indicate greater or lesser rejection.)

Median Average "Rejection of Guilt" score

By Laender

Bavaria	3.78
Hesse	3.81
Wuerttemberg-Baden	3.82

By education

7 years or less	3.82
8 years	3.83
9 - 11 years	3.80
12 years or more	3.60

By age

Under 20 years	3.78
20 - 29 years	3.78
30 - 39 years	3.85
40 - 49 years	3.75
50 - 59 years	3.78
60 years and over	3.92

By sex

Men	3.75
Women	3.96

By religion

Catholic	3.78
Protestant	3.88

By social status

Upper middle	3.80
Middle	3.77
Lower middle	3.78
Lower	3.85

By income

Middle and above	3.60
Lower	3.80
Lowest	3.90

(Median average score for the total population is 3.8)

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Relation between anti-semitism and
rejection of guilt ...


A very important finding in this study is the identification of rejection of collective guilt with racial bias. People who are intensely anti-semitic (See ODIC Opinion Surveys Report # 49 "Anti-Semitism in the American Zone") are markedly more likely to deny collective responsibility for Germany's past actions than are those with little racial bias. Moreover, as shown in the table below, the gradations between the rejection of collective guilt and degree of racial bias are consistent.

Rejection Score and Racial Bias Scale

Proportion in Score group:	Little Bias	Nation- alist	Racist	High Anti-semitic	Intense
0	2%	1%	1%	*	-
1	10	6	5	3	1
2	20	14	11	8	4
3	23	25	20	15	9
4	21	24	23	25	21
5	15	16	21	21	22
6	9	9	14	18	23
7	*	4	5	10	17
NA.	*	1	*	*	3
Median Score	2.9	3.5	3.8	4.0	4.8

*Less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1%

... In the following pages, attitudes on specific issues are analyzed. It will be noted that a good majority acknowledges some responsibility for the Hitler regime, deny that the Versailles treaty justified World War II, and accepts the fact that German people committed atrocities against humanity, but a much larger majority feels that both sides in the war were guilty of many war crimes. A majority refuses to accept collective guilt for bringing on the war, and thinks Germany often gets into difficulties because other people misunderstand her. A plurality says that protection of Germans in Poland was not why Germany attacked Poland, but a not insignificant minority thinks otherwise.



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Responsibility for the Hitler regime ...

Six in ten Germans in the American Zone accept limited responsibility for the acts committed by the Hitler regime. Asked, "Do you believe that the German people are at least partly to blame for the acts of the Hitler regime because they supported it?" 63% say Yes. However, 31% refuse even this limited guilt, and 5% withhold opinions.

People who acknowledge collective guilt on other issues are much more inclined than those who do not, to share the blame for Hitler's acts, as is seen in the following comparative table.

Germans at least partly to
blame for acts of Hitler regime:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>		<u>Cases</u>
<u>Collective war guilt:</u>					
Yes	89%	9	2	(100%)	844
No (Rejection)	57%	40	3	(100%)	1997
<u>Attacked Poland to protect Germans there:</u>					
Yes (Rejection)	61%	36	3	(100%)	626
No	72%	27	11	(100%)	1381
<u>Harshness of Versailles:</u>					
Justified war (Rejection)	54%	44	2	(100%)	201
Did not justify war	68%	34	18	(100%)	2041
<u>Harshness of Versailles:</u>					
A cause of the war (Rejection)	63%	35	2	(100%)	749
Not a cause of the war	73%	27	*	(100%)	1057
<u>Because other people misunderstand, Germany often in trouble:</u>					
Agree (Rejection)	65%	32	3	(100%)	1715
Disagree	72%	26	2	(100%)	690
<u>Both sides in war committed many war crimes:</u>					
Agree (Rejection)	65%	31	4	(100%)	2482
Disagree	71%	27	2	(100%)	192
<u>Germans killed and tortured helpless millions:</u>					
Agree	73%	24	3	(100%)	1753
Disagree (Rejection)	49%	47	4	(100%)	612

- ... People who exhibit anti-semitic tendencies are much less ready to accept blame for Hitler's acts than those who show little bias. Also the people who think the Allies have no right to limit future industry are much less willing to share any responsibility for Hitler's government than is true of the small group who think limitations on industry are justified.

It is interesting to note that the role of education is reversed on this issue -- fewer of the better educated than of the poorly educated think the German People are in any way to blame for Hitler's government. Otherwise, group differences are slight, though, as noted below, Hessians are somewhat less inclined than people in the other two Laender to share any blame for Hitler.

German people share responsibility
for the acts of the Hitler regime:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>		<u>Cases</u>
<u>Laender:</u>					
Bavaria	65%	30	5	(100%)	1615
Hesse	61%	32	7	(100%)	731
Wuerttemberg-Baden	57%	26	7	(100%)	669
<u>Education:</u>					
7 years or less	66%	27	7	(100%)	1129
8 years	65%	28	7	(100%)	1303
9 - 11 years	61%	37	2	(100%)	367
12 years or more	56%	42	2	(100%)	197
<u>Today's political parties:</u>					
Serve public welfare	68%	29	3	(100%)	1531
Serve selfish interests	58%	29	15	(100%)	692
<u>People are better served by:</u>					
Many political parties	68%	29	3	(100%)	1841
A single political party	65%	33	2	(100%)	694
<u>Allied limitations on industry:</u>					
Justified	80%	17	3	(100%)	320
Not justified	64%	33	3	(100%)	2254
<u>Racial bias scale:</u>					
Little bias	74%	24	2	(100%)	611
Nationalist	68%	30	2	(100%)	561
Racist	64%	31	5	(100%)	671
High anti-semitic	61%	32	7	(100%)	637
Intense anti-semitic	55%	33	13	(100%)	624

Collective war guilt ...

Only a minority (28%) of Germans in the American Zone feel that the German people are to blame for the outbreak of World War II. Queried, "Do you believe that the German people are to blame for the war because they permitted a government to come into power which wanted to plunge the world into war?" 67% say No, 5% have no opinion, and, as stated, 28% say Yes.

Again, there is a close relationship between views on this issue and those on other collective responsibility issues. Especially is this true in regard to blame for the acts of the Hitler regime and for the part the Versailles treaty played in bringing on the war -- as would be expected. Here, too, the connection between racial bias and refusal to accept collective war guilt is marked.

Germans collective guilty for the war					
	Yes	No	No op.		Cases
<u>Germans responsible for acts of Hitler:</u>					
Yes	59%	59	2	(100%)	1927
No (Rejection)	9%	89	2	(100%)	896
<u>Harshness of Versailles:</u>					
Justified war (Rejection)	18%	80	2	(100%)	201
Did not justify war	31%	67	2	(100%)	2041
<u>Harshness of Versailles:</u>					
A cause of the war (Rejection)	26%	73	1	(100%)	749
Not a cause of the war	36%	63	1	(100%)	1057
<u>Racial Bias Scale:</u>					
Little bias	37%	60	3	(100%)	611
Nationalist	30%	65	5	(100%)	671
Racist	30%	66	4	(100%)	561
High anti-semitism	23%	71	6	(100%)	637
Intense anti-semitism	19%	69	12	(100%)	524

- ... Also educated people are less prepared than the poorly educated to assume collective blame ... 67% of those with 7 years or less schooling in contrast to 75% of those with 12 years or more schooling say that the Germans are not collectively responsible for the war by virtue of their support of a war-minded government.
- ... Among Laender, Bavaria is least disposed to accept collective guilt, voting 71% as against 64% in Hesse and 60% in Wuertemberg-Baden against the view.
- ... Attitudes toward Allied limitations on Germany's industrial potential also have a bearing on opinions on collective war guilt ... 53% of those who consider the limitations justified in contrast to 71% of those who think them not justified say that the German people are not responsible for the war. And people who suspect the value of present-day political parties are also more likely than those who think they serve the general welfare to deny war guilt, voting, respectively, 71% and 64% against it. Other group differences are slight.

The Versailles Treaty and World War II ...

As is well known, the German people were given a strenuous propaganda campaign by Hitler and his followers on the evils of the Versailles "Diktat". Constantly, the injustice and harshness of this treaty were emphasized as a justification for aggressive action. Results of this study indicate, however, that the majority of the German people do not accept the thesis. But those that do apparently learned their lesson well -- at least to the extent that they are prepared to deny suggestions of collective guilt.

Two questions were asked, the first was "Did the harshness of the Versailles Treaty give the German people a right to start a second world war?"; and the second, asked only of those answering in the negative, "Was the harshness of this treaty a cause of this war?" To the first, 68% replied No -- the Versailles Treaty did not justify the war; only 7% said Yes, and a large minority -- 25% -- withheld their opinions. And a bare majority (52%) of those asked whether the treaty was a cause of the war answered affirmatively; 37% said No, and 11% did not express an opinion. Clearly, then, only a minority of Germans see no connection between the Versailles Treaty and World War II. And those who do follow a consistent pattern of denial of collective guilt. For example ...

... 80% of the people who say the harshness of Versailles justified the war, as against
67% of those who say it did not, feel that the German people bear no collective guilt for the war.

... 80% of those who say Versailles justified the war, as against
62% of those who say it did not, feel that Germany often is in difficulties because it is misunderstood.

Moreover, 42% of the people who feel that the Versailles treaty gave Germany a right to start the war, in contrast to 21% who hold the contrary view feel that Germany made war on Poland to save Germans in Poland from mistreatment. Also they are less inclined (55%) than their counterpart group (70%) to think that public interests will be better served by several political parties, rather than a single one. And 32% of them, in contrast to 20% of the people who do not think the Versailles treaty justified the war disagree that it is true that Germans tortured or murdered millions of helpless Europeans.

Versailles Treaty justified the war ...

Harshness of Versailles Treaty gave
Germany a right to start World War II:

	Yes	No	No op.	Cases
<u>Laender:</u>				
Bavaria	7%	67	26	(100%) 1615
Hesse	9%	67	24	(100%) 731
Wuerttemberg-Baden	6%	68	26	(100%) 659
<u>People best served by:</u>				
Many political parties	6%	78	16	(100%) 1841
One single political party	10%	65	25	(100%) 694
<u>Today political parties:</u>				
Serve public welfare	6%	76	18	(100%) 1531
Serve selfish interests	7%	62	31	(100%) 1396
<u>Collective war guilt:</u>				
Yes	4%	75	21	(100%) 844
No (Rejection)	8%	68	24	(100%) 1997
<u>Germany attacked Poland to protect Germans there:</u>				
Yes (Rejection)	14%	68	18	(100%) 626
No	5%	83	12	(100%) 1381
<u>Germany often in difficulties because others misunderstand:</u>				
Agree (Rejection)	9%	74	17	(100%) 1715
Disagree	5%	65	10	(100%) 590
<u>Many war crimes committed by both sides in war:</u>				
Agree (Rejection)	8%	71	21	(100%) 2482
Disagree	4%	80	16	(100%) 192
<u>Racial bias scale:</u>				
Little bias	5%	81	14	(100%) 611
Nationalist	5%	77	18	(100%) 561
Racist	8%	70	22	(100%) 671
High anti-semitism	8%	65	27	(100%) 637
Intense anti-semitism	9%	43	47	(100%) 524

Relation between racial bias and the Versailles treaty as justifying the war ...

The more racial bias a group has, the less the tendency to feel that the Versailles treaty was not a justification for the war. Interestingly, however, this does not mean an increasingly positive view that the treaty justified the war -- as there is little difference between the various groups on this. Rather, the "No Opinion" group increases proportionately as the scale of racial bias ascends, as the following table indicates:

	Harshness of the Versailles Treaty Justified the War:				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>		<u>Cases</u>
Racial Bias Scale:					
Little Bias	5%	81	14	(100%)	611
Nationalist	5%	77	18	(100%)	561
Racist	8%	70	22	(100%)	671
High Anti-Semitic	8%	65	27	(100%)	637
Intense Anti-Semitic	9%	43	48	(100%)	524

... Paralleling in part the opinions recorded above are those of the various education groups. The highest "No Opinion" vote is recorded by the best educated group, and in a more pronounced fashion than the division on the racial bias scale.

	Harshness of the Versailles Treaty Justified the War:				
	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>		<u>Cases</u>
Education:					
7 years or less	6%	74	20	(100%)	1129
8 years	8%	68	24	(100%)	1303
9 - 11 years	12%	74	14	(100%)	367
12 years or more	13%	30	57	(100%)	197

... People who feel that the Versailles Treaty gave Germany a right to start the war are also more inclined than those who hold the opposite view to feel that both sides in the war committed war crimes, and to deny that Germany tortured and murdered helpless Europeans. (See table on next page.)

... People who think that the harshness of Versailles treaty was a cause, though not a justification, of the war, tend to hold opinions similar to those held by the groups which deny collective guilt. That is, they believe, more than their counterpart groups, that the German people are not responsible for the acts of the Hitler regime, bear no blame for the war, get into difficulties because other people misunderstand Germany, it is not true that Germany murdered millions of helpless people, and that both sides committed many war crimes.

Unlike the educated group on other issues, here, however, the best educated more than the uneducated tend to believe that Versailles was not a cause of the war. It seems plausible that well-educated Germans recognize and reject this weakened for of the question because it puts so weakly what they more often feel is a basic issue. Also, there is less relationship between opinions on this issue and anti-semitism than is usually the case with the collective guilt questions. Thus people who have little racial bias tend to think much the same on this matter as do the anti-semitics.

Attitudes on other collective guilt issues ...

Four other questions were asked of Germans in the American Zone to get at attitudes toward recognition of collective guilt. The questions and replies to each are given here, followed by a tabular breakdown of group differences. It will be noted that on each issue the people who deny guilt, or rationalize German actions, tend to follow much the same pattern described in the foregoing.

The attack on Poland ...

The question and replies: "Did Germany attack Poland in order to protect Germans living there from mistreatment by Poland?"

Yes	21%
No	46
No opinion	33

Germany is misunderstood ...

The question and replies: "Germany often finds herself in a difficult situation because other people have no understanding of Germany."

Agree	56%
Disagree	21
No opinion	23

War crimes ...

The question and replies: "Do you agree or disagree that both sides in this war committed many crimes against humanity and peace?"

Agree	83%
Disagree	6
No opinion	11

German atrocities ...

The question and replies: "Do you agree or disagree that research has shown that the Germans tortured and murdered millions of helpless Europeans?"

Agree	59%
Disagree	20
No opinion	21

Attack on Poland ...

Germany attacked Poland to
protect Germans living there:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>		<u>Cases</u>
<u>By Laender:</u>					
Bavaria	21%	49	30	(100%)	1615
Hesse	23%	42	35	(100%)	731
Wuerttemberg-Baden	20%	43	37	(100%)	659
<u>By education:</u>					
7 years or less	17%	45	38	(100%)	1129
8 years	23%	42	35	(100%)	1303
9 - 11 years	26%	53	21	(100%)	367
12 years or more	22%	67	11	(100%)	197
<u>People are better served by:</u>					
Many political parties	21%	53	26	(100%)	1841
By one single political party	25%	46	29	(100%)	694
<u>Today's political parties:</u>					
Serve general welfare	21%	51	38	(100%)	1531
Serve selfish interests	23%	55	22	(100%)	692
<u>Collective war guilt:</u>					
Yes	15%	57	28	(100%)	844
No (Rejection)	23%	44	33	(100%)	1997
<u>Both sides in war committed many war crimes:</u>					
Agree (Rejection)	23%	47	30	(100%)	2482
Disagree	18%	70	14	(100%)	182
<u>Germans tortured and murdered millions:</u>					
Agree	20%	55	25	(100%)	1753
Disagree (Rejection)	29%	40	31	(100%)	612
<u>Racial bias scale:</u>					
Little bias	19%	60	21	(100%)	611
Nationalist	19%	54	27	(100%)	561
Racist	21%	48	31	(100%)	671
High anti-semitism	24%	37	39	(100%)	637
Intense anti-semitism	21%	29	50	(100%)	524

Germany is misunderstood ...

Germany often gets into difficulty
because other people misunderstand:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>		<u>Cases</u>
<u>Laender:</u>					
Bavaria	55%	21	24	(100%)	1615
Hesse	61%	15	24	(100%)	731
Wuerttemberg-Baden	58%	22	20	(100%)	659
<u>Education:</u>					
7 years or less	50%	20	30	(100%)	1129
8 years	60%	17	23	(100%)	1303
9 - 11 years	65%	22	13	(100%)	367
12 years or more	71%	25	4	(100%)	197
<u>Collective war guilt:</u>					
Yes	51%	27	22	(100%)	844
No (Rejection)	62%	18	20	(100%)	1997
<u>Both sides committed many war crimes:</u>					
Agree (Rejection)	43%	19	18	(100%)	2482
Disagree	33%	49	18	(100%)	192
<u>Germans tortured and murdered millions:</u>					
Agree	58%	25	17	(100%)	1753
Disagree (Rejection)	69%	16	15	(100%)	612
<u>People are better served by:</u>					
Many political parties	62%	23	15	(100%)	1841
One single political party	59%	19	22	(100%)	694
<u>Today's political parties:</u>					
Serve public interests	59%	23	18	(100%)	1531
Serve selfish interests	67%	21	12	(100%)	592
<u>Racial bias scale:</u>					
Little bias	57%	28	15	(100%)	611
Nationalist	56%	25	19	(100%)	561
Racist	60%	19	21	(100%)	671
High anti-semitism	61%	13	26	(100%)	637
Intense anti-semitism	52%	12	36	(100%)	524

Both sides committed war crimes ...

Many crimes against humanity and peace
committed by both sides in the war:

	Yes	No	No op.		Cases
<u>Laender:</u>					
Bavaria	81%	8	11	(100%)	1615
Hesse	84%	6	10	(100%)	731
Wuerttemberg-Baden	86%	4	10	(100%)	659
<u>Education:</u>					
7 years or less	70%	8	13	(100%)	1129
8 years	85%	5	10	(100%)	1303
9 - 11 years	87%	5	8	(100%)	317
12 years or more	89%	8	33	(100%)	197
<u>People are better served by:</u>					
Many political parties	86%	7	7	(100%)	1841
One single political party	85%	6	9	(100%)	694
<u>Today's political parties:</u>					
Serve public welfare	83%	8	9	(100%)	1531
Serve selfish interests	89%	6	5	(100%)	692
<u>Collective war guilt:</u>					
Yes	81%	9	10	(100%)	844
No (Rejection)	86%	6	8	(100%)	1997
<u>Germans tortured and murdered millions:</u>					
Agree	86%	8	6	(100%)	1753
Disagree(Rejection)	90%	6	4	(100%)	612
<u>Racial bias scale:</u>					
Little bias	78%	12	10	(100%)	611
Nationalist	83%	9	8	(100%)	561
Racist	88%	4	8	(100%)	671
High anti-semitism	86%	3	11	(100%)	637
Intense anti-semitism	78%	3	19	(100%)	524

German atrocities ...

German people tortured and
murdered millions of helpless:

	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No op.</u>	<u>Cases</u>
<u>By Laender:</u>				
Bavaria	60%	20	20	(100%) 1615
Hesse	59%	21	20	(100%) 731
Wuerttemberg-Baden	52%	22	26	(100%) 659
<u>By education:</u>				
7 years or less	60%	16	24	(100%) 1129
8 years	56%	22	22	(100%) 1303
9 - 11 years	57%	29	14	(100%) 367
12 years	69%	22	9	(100%) 197
<u>People are better served by:</u>				
Many political parties	65%	20	15	(100%) 1841
A single political party	57%	25	18	(100%) 694
<u>Today's political parties:</u>				
Serve public welfare	65%	18	17	(100%) 1531
Serve selfish interests	69%	27	14	(100%) 692
<u>Collective war guilt:</u>				
Yes	71%	13	16	(100%) 844
No (Rejection)	55%	24	21	(100%) 1997
<u>Racial bias scale:</u>				
Little bias	72%	15	13	(100%) 611
Nationalist	68%	15	17	(100%) 561
Racist	60%	22	18	(100%) 671
High anti-semitism	51%	25	24	(100%) 561
Intense anti-semitism	39%	24	37	(100%) 524

Conclusions ...

First: The Rejection scores indicate that overall judgments are apparently independent, individual judgments, little influenced by social status, environment or group pressures. On the basis of the scores, it is impossible to isolate any group -- economic, social, political, religious or geographic -- and claim that here are the people who accept, or reject, collective guilt for Germany's recent past. Nor, numerically, are there important polar groups -- that is, few accept and few reject all or most responsibility.

Second: On individual questions, majority opinions in the direction of acceptance of guilt are the rule. One very important shift occurs, however -- refusal by a large majority to acknowledge blame for the war because Germans put a war-minded government in power. To accept responsibility on other issues, but not on this one is best described as a "double talk." It is like saying, "I'll take the blame for all of the evil of the Hitler regime except the evil."

Third: People with the most education, i.e. the leadership group, seem to be nearly as confused on these issues as their lesser educated countrymen. Their replies to the question on the German attack on Poland shows that they are better informed than others. But their unwillingness to deny that the Versailles Treaty gave Germany a right to start World War II suggests a closely-unified interest group.

Fourth: The effectiveness of the Goebbels' propaganda line is seen in the relationship between the attitudes analyzed here and anti-semitism. To the extent that rejection of guilt is a projection of guilt on others, anti-semitism might well be considered a component part of the rejection of guilt picture.

Fifth: The questions analyzed here are interrelated, but only moderately so. Acceptance of one charge is sometimes countered by rejection of another. For this reason, generalized charges of the "guilt" of the German people must often have little effect. Appeals directed to the German people based on specifics would probably have better results. A case in point is the German attack on Poland -- a matter on which this study shows many Germans to be misinformed or uninformed. A documented, but simply detailed account (for the less well educated) about it might provide an opening wedge in the re-education of the German people.

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